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Carol Hanlon
S&ER Products Manager
U. S. Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
P.O. Box 30307 M/S 025
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0707

2 October 2001

Subject: Yucca Mountain Repository – Public Comments

Dear Ms. Hanlon,

I understand from the attached letter that the Department of Energy is soliciting public comment as Secretary Abraham considers recommending the Yucca Mountain site as the nation's radioactive waste repository. This letter is in response to that solicitation.

By way of background, I have a Ph.D. in Nuclear Engineering from the University of Illinois. I currently, however, work at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in a non-nuclear area. Consequently, I have no vested interest in this decision, beyond that of other members of the public, but do have more knowledge on nuclear matters than most.

I am completely in favor of building this repository.

Since first researching this subject as a freshman in college I have been convinced that burying nuclear waste is currently the best way to dispose of it. There will always be questions in the finer details, but the overall picture is clear: Geologic records can be used to show the stability of formations sufficient to expect, with good confidence, that the waste will stay inviolate for the necessary tens of thousands of years. Technical measures can further assure its integrity. Compared to all other possible disposal methods this provides the least risk to humans and the environment. And that risk is very small compared to the benefits of nuclear power, and, hence, acceptable. I am not an expert on Yucca Mountain, nor waste disposal in general. I am confident, however, that we will not find a better location than the emptiness of the Nevada desert. You can bury it here by my house, however, if that would suit better.

One other very direct comment and criticism which I hope may be of help: The Department should have long since been embarrassed by its inability to make this decision. Is it leading, or following? Is it proactive in furthering the energy needs of our country, or simply responding to powerful lobbies? Can we trust it to find the best path through the (apparent) coming problems of global warming and oil shortages? Is it paralyzed by fear of friction from anti-nuclear voices who usually only criticize (often disingenuously), but have no realistic alternatives? This Yucca Mountain morass has long been an example of government failure to look out for the long-term needs of the country.

That said, I am greatly pleased that (perhaps) progress is now being made. I encourage the Secretary to approve Yucca Mountain forcefully and clearly. We can then hope the next steps will be able to be taken to allow nuclear energy to play its role in providing crucial energy for our country.

Sincerely –



Dr. Wade H. Williams



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

August 27, 2001

Ms. Gail H. Marcus, President
American Nuclear Society
555 North Kensington Avenue
LaGrange Park, IL 60526

Dear Ms. Marcus:

Over the next several months the Secretary of Energy will carefully consider a large body of scientific documents, as well as the views of the public, and decide whether or not to recommend to the President that Yucca Mountain be developed to serve as our repository for spent nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste. As you probably know, on August 21, 2001, the Department of Energy (Department) published a Federal Register notice (66 FR 43850) which scheduled public hearings and announced a closing date of September 20, 2001 for public comments on this possible recommendation by the Secretary. Your comments in response to this notice would be very much appreciated.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as amended (the Act), establishes the Federal responsibility for the final disposition of spent nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste in the United States. This responsibility includes 50 years of defense legacy wastes that have resulted from the development of nuclear weapons, spent fuel that has provided power for the United States Navy, spent fuel from the Nation's university research reactors, and spent fuel from the Nation's civilian reactors, which provide approximately twenty percent of our domestic electricity supply.

The Department has spent 20 years and over \$6.7 billion studying various means to fulfill the Federal responsibility. Since 1987, at the direction of the Act, the Department has been required to focus exclusively on the Yucca Mountain site. The result of this effort is contained within the Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation (PSSE) and other scientific documents produced by the Department. The PSSE and these other supporting technical documents are available on the Internet (<http://ymp.gov>), or may be requested by telephone (1-800-967-3477).

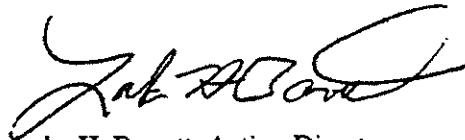
The Secretary's recommendation regarding the Yucca Mountain site is an important intermediate step in the decades-long process for siting and developing a repository. If the Secretary determines that the scientific evaluation of the site indicates the site is suitable for development of a repository, he may then submit a recommendation for site development to the President. If

the President accepts the Secretary's positive recommendation, he would recommend the site as qualified for application for a construction license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The State of Nevada would then have the opportunity to submit a disapproval notice. If it does so, Congress would have to pass a law approving the President's recommendation in order for it to take effect. If the President's recommendation does take effect, the Department would then prepare and submit a construction license application to NRC.

It is important to note that, following a possible Presidential recommendation and prior to either the construction of or use of a repository, numerous additional steps must be satisfied. These steps include consideration of the Presidential recommendation by the State of Nevada and possibly the United States Congress. In addition, construction of a facility and receipt of waste requires the issuance of a construction license and a license to possess nuclear material, respectively, by the NRC after a rigorous review process with public involvement.

In providing comments to the Department, there are a number of topics regarding which your views and comments would be appreciated. An outline of these topics is enclosed for your use. The Department also values any other comments you believe would be relevant to its consideration. Your participation on this critical issue is important and helpful. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Lake H. Barrett, Acting Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive
Waste Management

Enclosure:
Suggested Topics for Public Comment on
Yucca Mountain